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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DURBAN 000054

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SUBJECT: ANC SECURES SIMPLE MAJORITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL

REF: PRETORIA 03329

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CLASSIFIED BY: Riley Sever, Acting Consul General.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The African National Congress (ANC) gained a simple majority in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) legislature for the first time following the recent floor crossing period. Previously, the ANC controlled 40 out of 80 seats, and governed in a coalition with the two members of the Minority Front. The defection of Linda Hlongwa from the National Democratic Convention (NADECO) brought the ANC to 41 seats. While the ANC consolidated power at the provincial level, the defections of four ANC members to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) at the municipal level marked the first time that the ANC lost members to the IFP, proving that for now, the IFP remains a viable party in provincial politics. END SUMMARY.

FLOOR CROSSING RESULTS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

12. (SBU) South Africa's recent floor crossing period from 1-15 September allowed the African National Congress (ANC) to firm up its control over KwaZulu-Natal. (See REFTEL for background on the floor crossing process.) At the provincial level, one member of the KZN Parliament defected during the floor crossing period. Linda Hlongwa left the National Democratic Convention (NADECO) to join the African National Congress (ANC). This allowed the ANC to secure a 50 percent plus 1 majority in KwaZulu-Natal for the first time. Previously, the ANC was dependent on a coalition with the two members of the Minority Front (MF). The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) remains the second-largest party in the province, with 27 seats. The Democratic Alliance remains a distant third, with six seats. The National Democratic Convention (NADECO) now has four seats. MF has two, and the United Democratic Movement and the African Christian Democratic Party have only one seat each.

13. (C) At the municipal level, KwaZulu-Natal witnessed more floor crossing action than any other province, with 27 of 61 municipalities affected. Of those, four municipalities changed hands. Richard's Bay (uMhlathule), Ndawene, and Ezingolweni shifted from IFP control to the ANC. However, the ANC lost control of Dundee (eNdumeni) when two of its councilors joined the IFP. The loss of Dundee to the IFP was a major blow to the ANC in KZN, as the ANC had never before lost any of its councilors to the IFP. Further, Newcastle, which the ANC had previously lost to an IFP, NADECO, and DA coalition, remained out of the ANC's reach. The ANC also stands to lose control of Mooi River (Mooi Mpofana) after by-elections are held in October. Two other ANC councilors also defected to the IFP in Zululand, but this had no impact on the municipality as it was

already firmly held by the IFP. Conversely, the IFP's majority eroded in Vryheid (Abaqulusi), leaving the municipality without a clear majority.

RICHARD'S BAY - THE PRIZED MUNICIPALITY

14. (C) Richard's Bay (uMhlathule) is the most prized of the contested municipalities in KZN. In the lead up to floor crossing, KZN ANC leaders were confident that the ANC would gain enough seats to take Richard's Bay from the IFP. During floor crossing, two councilors crossed to the ANC, one to the IFP, and one to the Federal African Convention. One IFP councilor resigned after he was blocked from crossing to the ANC, leaving one seat unfilled. The ANC temporarily controls Richard's Bay with 30 councilors. The IFP and its coalition partners now only have 29. However, the empty seat will be filled during by-elections to be held in late October. As the councilor that resigned is from a ward with strong IFP support, it is likely that an IFP member will fill the last seat, creating a 30-30 deadlock. Both the IFP and ANC remain confident that if new elections for Mayor are called that they will take the majority in Richard's Bay. It is likely, however, that the IFP will come out on top if the ANC is unable to block another round of mayoral elections.

15. (C) COMMENT: While the ANC has firmed up its majority at the provincial level, the loss of four councilors to the IFP at the municipal level may have been a wake-up call for the ANC. The four councilors that defected cited infighting within the ANC over matters such as succession as one of the principle reasons that they defected to the IFP. Further, uncertainty surrounding the future of Richard's Bay will continue to worry the ANC in KZN, and its loss in October would hurt the credibility of the party in the province. The ANC is also still reeling from the loss of Dundee, with Premier of KwaZulu-Natal and Provincial ANC Chairman, S'bu Ndebele, blaming the loss on the "ganging up" of the IFP with the DA and NADECO. He further proclaimed that Dundee's loss "undermined democracy" in the province. The IFP National Chairwoman, Zanele Magwaza-Msibi, has retorted that the ANC is "used to being the only recipients (of defectors) and now

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that it's the other way around, they complain." The ANC's worries prove that the IFP is not quite out of the race yet.
END COMMENT.
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